

*B*ridging the
Centuries:
*T*he Jewel on the Bay



A History Commemorating the Sixtieth Anniversary
of the County Administration Center

1938-1998

Message from the Chairman

DECEMBER 1998



It is a great privilege to chair the San Diego County Board of Supervisors during this historic 60th anniversary year of the County Administration Center. This year the board accomplished a great many things, not the least of which was approving more than \$3 million for renovations of our “jewel on the bay,” including replacement of the original roof tiles. The renovations are underway and will be completed in time for the 150th anniversary of San Diego County in the year 2000.

As Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, I am honored to dedicate this book to the men and women who helped construct the building and those who have served the public from the County Administration Center over the last 60 years, as well as those who continue their legacy of public service today. Because of every dedicated employee who has ever worked for the County, or will in the future, the outlook is outstanding for the residents of San Diego County and for the visitors who enjoy our quality of life, the benefits of our economic growth and the beauty of our region.

It is my hope this book will serve as an informational and insightful resource to scholars, historians and residents throughout San Diego County. This book, like the County Administration Center, is yours to use and enjoy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Cox".

GREG COX
Chairman

Proclamation

HONORING HISTORIC COUNTY ADMINISTRATION CENTER DAY

WHEREAS, in 1902, residents of San Diego County recognized the need for a building to house the city and county offices, and in 1926, noted city planner, John Nolen, wrote that building a Civic Center would “transform the civic spirit of the community, raise the civic pride of the citizens and attract favorably the attention of visitors”; and

WHEREAS, in December 1926, the Board of Supervisors passed a resolution declaring “the necessity for the erection of a public building” for both the City and the County; and

WHEREAS, three countywide votes were taken to approve the tidelands site for construction of the Civic Center, but three countywide bond votes to secure the necessary funding were defeated; and

WHEREAS, in 1935, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt authorized one million dollars to be granted from the Works Progress Administration one week after a personal tour of the site; and

WHEREAS, four San Diego architects –William Templeton Johnson, Richard S. Requa, Louis J. Gill, and Samuel Hamill – oversaw and prepared the plans for the Civic Center; and

WHEREAS, after the official groundbreaking for the Civic Center on December 5, 1935, actual construction began on January 4, 1936; and

WHEREAS, the Civic Center was officially dedicated on July 16, 1938 by President Roosevelt, five months prior to actual completion of the building, which was celebrated by opening ceremonies on December 23, 1938; and

WHEREAS, the San Diego Historical Society maintains archival materials through identifying, cataloguing and preserving our region’s treasure of drawings, oral histories, and written and photographic information, including some of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors’ historical documents; **NOW THEREFORE**,

BE IT PROCLAIMED by Chairman Greg Cox and all members of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors on this 14th day of July 1998, that they commend the **SAN DIEGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY** for its many contributions to maintaining historical records for the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors, and in recognition of the 60th Anniversary of the dedication by President Roosevelt, hereby declare **JULY 16, 1998** to be “**HISTORIC COUNTY ADMINISTRATION CENTER DAY**” throughout San Diego County.



Greg Cox

District 1



Patricia Jacob

District 2



Pamela Slater

District 3



Bob Roberts

District 4



Bill Horn

District 5

Preface

DECEMBER 1998



This document commemorates the 60th anniversary of the San Diego County Administration Center (previously known as both the Civic Center and the City and County Administration Building). It is intended to serve as a general resource for all who are interested in the history of San Diego's jewel on the bay.

This book began as a project of the Clerk of the Board in 1996. Much like the planning and construction of the County Administration Center 60 years ago, this book has been possible through the commitment, hard work and support of many people and organizations. The core narrative was prepared by Sara Kendall, a resident of San Diego County and an undergraduate student at the University of California, Berkeley, while serving as an intern in the Clerk

of the Board's office. Ms. Kendall conducted extensive research, weaving together a variety of sources that not only provide a history of the County Administration Center, but also give us a glimpse into the growth and change in this region. The San Diego Historical Society, *The San Diego Union-Tribune* and the City of San Diego Central Library were magnificent resources for information, drawings and photographs. From the County's Department of Media and Public Relations, Rene Quaresma edited and laid out the text and photos, and Gretchen Sizer designed the cover. Holly C-A Richardson, Assistant to Board Chairman Greg Cox, helped coordinate the many players, and Richard Denhalter, Jan Bryson, Lucy Franck, and Jim Browning provided essential assistance throughout this project. The support of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors and the Chief Administrative Officer have been essential to all that we have been able to accomplish at the County Administration Center, including the renovations and celebration of the building.

For more than half the 20th century, the County Administration Center has stood on the bay, welcoming residents and visitors alike, symbolizing the highest aspirations and ideals of public service – that “the noblest motive is the public good.” As we approach a new millennium, the County Administration Center stands as a bridge between the centuries – a rich past coupled with a sense of hope and excitement for the future. This commemorative book is dedicated to the people of San Diego County: past, present and future.

Thomas J. Pastuszka
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

Table of Contents

The Era Preceding Construction

Conception of the Dream	2
Examination of Potential Construction Sites	3
Securing the Waterfront Site	5
Entitlement Challenged.....	6
Applying for Aid	7
Planning for the Future	8
Civic Center Design Approval	9

Construction of the Civic Center

Groundbreaking Ceremony	10
Making Engineering History	11
From the Ground Up	12
Dedication Ceremony for the Civic Center	14
Occupation of the New Building	15

The Design of the Building

Architecture and Ornamentation of Exterior	16
Interior Adornments	17
Interior Artwork	18
The County Seal	18
The Guardian of Water	19
Layout of the Grounds	20

The County Administration Center: 1963 - Present

The Civic Center Becomes the CAC	21
Building Expansions	22
New Considerations for CAC Development	23
Historic Designation of the County Administration Center	24
Preparing for the Twenty-First Century	25
Celebrating 60 Years	26
Works Cited	28
Chronology of the County Administration Center	30
Resource Catalog	33
Extracts from County Records	36